

NUTRITION

Questions Answered Concerning Food Choices

1. Should milk and eggs be eaten with other foods to form “complete” protein?

Like fish, poultry and meat, the protein in milk and eggs is nutritionally complete. A complete protein is made up of a balanced supply of amino acid building blocks. In contrast, the protein in grains, beans, nuts and vegetables is “incomplete” because one or more amino acids are missing. But experts say that as long as a variety of these incomplete protein foods are eaten throughout a day, they work together to meet your protein needs by filling your plate with two-thirds (or more) plant foods and one-third (or less) animal foods.

2. Is it true that chocolate is good for your health?

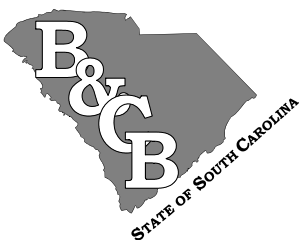
Researchers have identified natural antioxidant substances in chocolate that may offer protection against the development of heart disease and cancer. This group of antioxidants, called flavonoids, seems to protect cells from highly reactive molecules called “free radicals” that can damage cells, start the development of cancer or convert cholesterol carrying particles to a more damaging form. Eating just small amounts of chocolate can attain antioxidant benefits. One-half ounce of dark chocolate is enough. For greater health benefits and fewer calories, choose fruits and vegetables since they supply antioxidants flavonoids like chocolate, but they also contain other health promoting benefits, like dietary fiber and vitamins.

3. How can a food be labeled “fat-free,” if vegetable oil is an ingredient?

The legal definition of a fat-free food is that it contains less than 0.5 grams of fat in a standard serving. Therefore, 0.4 grams of fat per serving would be rounded off to “0” on the Nutrition Fact panel. Although a trace amount of oil might appear in the recipe, each serving of food would contain about a tenth of a teaspoon. Remember fat-free does not mean calorie-free, so it’s still important to watch your portion size.

4. How do soy and rice-based milk substitutes compare to regular milk nutritionally?

Soymilk and rice beverages are about equal in calories to reduced-fat (2%) cow’s milk, while total fat content is about equal or slightly lower. These non-dairy versions, however, have only unsaturated fat, the reduced fat cow milk has about 3 grams of saturated fat per cup. Be sure to check the labels carefully to see if soymilk and rice beverages have been fortified to include calcium and vitamins D, B-12 and A. Finally soymilk like cow’s milk is a good source of protein, whereas rice beverages contain very little.



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